



# Department of Justice

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## **TWO SENTENCED FOR THEIR ROLES IN CONSPIRACY, ROBBERY OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

COLUMBUS - Two individuals who were part of a conspiracy to rob financial institutions in Central Ohio were sentenced in United States District Court here today. Gary G. Watkins, age 41, of 2750 Patrick Henry, Columbus was sentenced to 1772 months imprisonment (147 years, 8 months) and was ordered to pay \$859,772 in restitution to the victims. Frankie Lee Jones, age 55, of 6628 Seahurst Drive, Columbus was sentenced to 80 months imprisonment and five years of supervised release. Watkins and Jones, along with co-conspirators, were guilty of robbing a bank, two credit unions and three check-cashing businesses between March 2002 and July 2004. In each robbery, an employee of the financial institution was abducted from their home and forced to accompany the robbers to the scene of the crime.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; Christopher P. Sadowski, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; and Columbus Police Chief James G. Jackson announced the sentence in conjunction with Stanley J. Borgia, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Cincinnati Field Division; Chief Jeanne A. Miller of the Reynoldsburg Police Department; Chief James E. Stacy, Whitehall Police Department; and Capt. M.E. Mauger, Chief of the Worthington Police Department.

The jury convicted Gary G. Watkins after a two-week trial on May 6, 2005, on one count of conspiracy, one count of conspiracy to commit armed robbery; three counts of armed robbery; three counts of armed bank robbery; and six counts of use of a firearm during a crime of violence.

Frankie Lee Jones, brother-in-law of Gary G. Watkins, was indicted on December 2, 2004, and plead guilty on March 4, 2005, to one count of conspiracy, one count of armed robbery, and one count of brandishing a firearm during a crime of violence (bank robbery). He was released on bond December 7, 2004, and was ordered today to surrender to the U.S. Marshals at a date to be determined later.

Other Co-conspirators include:

Eric K. Watkins, age 43, of Columbus, brother of Gary G. Watkins, was also convicted on May 6, 2005, on one count of conspiracy, one count of armed bank robbery, one firearm count and one count of possession of stolen money. Eric K. Watkins was arrested on August 26, 2004, and remains in federal custody. He is scheduled to be sentenced on September 6, 2005, at 9:00a.m. by Judge Marbley.

Darryl Jones, age 50, of Columbus, brother of Frankie Lee Jones, plead guilty on March 4, 2005, to one count of armed bank robbery, one count of violating the Hobbs Act, and one count of brandishing a firearm during a crime of violence (bank robbery). Jones was ordered detained on March 14, 2005, and remains in federal custody. He is scheduled to be sentenced on September 6, 2005, at 9:00a.m. by Judge Marbley.

Damon D. Jones, age 34, of Columbus, son of Frankie Lee Jones and nephew of Gary G. Watkins, plead guilty on May 24, 2005, before U.S. District Court Judge Edmund A. Sargus Jr., to one count of conspiracy, one count of armed robbery, and one count of brandishing a firearm during a crime of violence (bank robbery). He has been in federal custody since April 20, 2005, and is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Sargus on September 15, 2005, at 1:30p.m.

During the ten-day trial of Gary G. Watkins and Eric K. Watkins, over 30 victims testified in court about the abductions from their homes and subsequent robberies of the places where they were employed. Many of the victims had children in their homes during the time of the abductions. Some of those victims spoke at the sentencing hearing today.

The guilty verdicts were connected to the March 22, 2002, robbery of Quick Cash, 6591 East Main Street; the June 27, 2002, robbery of Checkland, 699 Harrisburg Pike; the December 9, 2002, robbery of Cashland, 4499 Refugee Road; the April 9, 2002, robbery of Sky Bank, 2880 North High Street; the May 23, 2003, robbery of the Whitehall Credit Union, 5025 East Main Street; and the July 23, 2004, robbery of the Western Credit Union, 750 Georgesville Road all located in the Columbus, Ohio area.

“The sentences today will finally bring some relief and closure to the numerous victims in this case,” Lockhart said. “There are no words to describe how these victims felt when they were kidnapped from their homes and held at gunpoint while being forced to cooperate with the defendants during these robberies.”

Lockhart commended ATF Agent Craig Brenneman and Columbus Police Detective Greg Franken who have been investigating the case for more than two years, and Assistant U.S. Attorney David Bosley, who prosecuted the case.

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